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## *House of Representatives*

# RECOGNIZING CONTRIBUTIONS OF “GREENSBORO FOUR” TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time, and the gentlemen from North Carolina for introducing this very important resolution honoring the Greensboro Four.

As the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. Miller) said, those of us who were old enough were immediately inspired by the Greensboro Four. They showed the awesome power of nonviolent, collective direct action, and they also showed the vulnerability of the racist power structures in the South.

I was a college freshman at the same time, at Cornell University. And almost immediately, we formed a group and had sit-ins in at the Woolworth's in Ithaca, New York, in solidarity with those that were going on through North Carolina and other States in the South.

The sit-ins immediately educated us. That is, even though we were informed, even though we were progressive, we had no idea of the specific indignities of the segregated lunch

counters, the signs that said “whites only” and “colored” for drinking fountains. We knew the schools were desegregated supposedly back in 1955. We saw the Montgomery bus boycott in 1956. We saw the power of direct action in the African states who first gained independence at the same time.

But what occurred amongst the students in Greensboro spread throughout the Nation like wildfire, not just in the South but also in the North. We believed what Martin Luther King, Jr. stated so eloquently from the Birmingham jail: “Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed.”

And we saw the sit-ins, a simple and quiet act perhaps, but one of great courage, considering the risks they were running, the Ku Klux Klan sitting at the same counters or nearby these first demonstrators.

Those of us in the North who thought we were brothers and cousins of those in the South

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started talking about what we should do, how we should help.

I remember, in fact, meeting the gentleman from Georgia (*John Lewis*), a colleague of ours from Atlanta, just a few months after that, and we ended up on the same bus to Jackson, Mississippi, and the Freedom Rides that took place to help desegregate the interstate facilities that were still segregated. We saw the interstate facilities as a focal point for Federal action. And those of us who went to jail managed to bring those cases before the Supreme Court, and just as the sit-inners had got the desegregation of the lunch counters so quickly, the interstate and other related facilities were desegregated because of the Freedom Rides.

I see the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. *Watt*) here today. I know he was personally

inspired by what was happening with the Greensboro Four. Many of us in this Congress, as the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. *Miller*) pointed out, were so inspired. We put our bodies on the line, we put our beliefs in action, and the Greensboro Four helped to shape and inspire the movement all across the country.

So we honor the Greensboro Four for demanding freedom for the oppressed, and we once again look to them today for inspiration in our struggle against the more subtle forms of racism that still exist today and the injustices that continue to plague our Nation. We will continue to look to the Greensboro Four for inspiration as we continue the still unfinished journey of America to become a Nation that is free from discrimination and racism.